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MAY 17, 2024 | VOLUME 15 | ISSUE 11

YOUR PURCHASE BENEFITS THE VENDORS.
PLEASE BUY ONLY FROM BADGED VENDORS.

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GROUND COVER

NEWS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUND UP | WASHTENAW COUNTY, MICH.

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Roberto Isla Caballero,
Groundcover vendor No. 347

THIS PAPER WAS BOUGHT FROM



@groundcovernews, include vendor name and vendor #

a note of **APPRECIATION**

**GROUNDCOVER NEWS
BOARD of DIRECTORS**

Groundcover has always thrived due to the contributions of volunteers. Every vendor and volunteer who has walked through our door in the basement of Bethlehem United Church of Christ makes a unique impact on our organization. There is an infinite list of individuals and groups to thank, but every now and then we like to recognize those who go above and beyond.

Veronica Sanitate

In the beginning of this year, our last founding board member, Veronica Sanitate, stepped down from the Groundcover News Board of Directors. She had served in this role for 13 years — since the start of Groundcover News in 2010. She helped the organization through many major transitions over the years and always provided a thoughtful, caring perspective that

centered the Groundcover News vendors through every change. She has contributed greatly to the newspaper itself both directly as a writer, and through her ongoing guidance as a board member with expertise in marketing and branding, holding multiple executive officer positions in her tenure with the organization. Thank you, Veronica. Groundcover would not have made it this far without you!

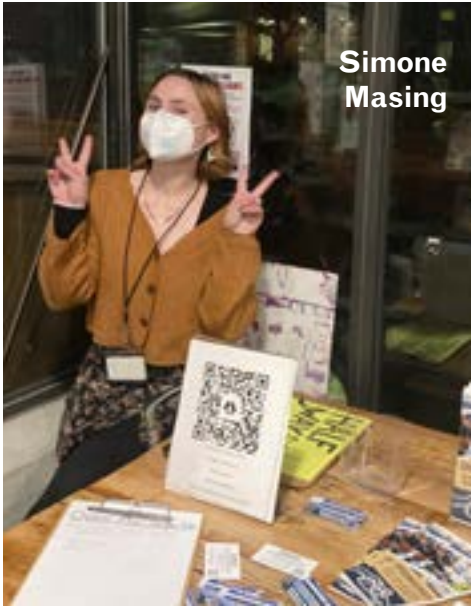
Simone Masing

Simone started as an undergraduate social work intern in the fall of 2023. Her original projects were related to building connections in the Ypsilanti area and strengthening vendor policies. She did that and more! Simone used her creative eye to revamp our insignia, design merchandise for our vendors and supporters, and fill our space with decorations and communications. Simone's final deliverable was a Vendor Handbook that puts



Veronica Sanitate

everything you need to know as a Groundcover vendor in one, accessible, visually pleasing easy-to-carry-around booklet. Simone, although your internship is over, we are so glad you are sticking around to help with Vendor Meetings and Groundcover Speaks recording on Fridays!



Simone Masing

**You both will always
have a home with
Groundcover News!**

GROUNDCOVER NEWS

PROVIDING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR SELF-DETERMINED INDIVIDUALS IMPACTED BY POVERTY,
PRODUCING A STREET NEWSPAPER THAT GIVES A PLATFORM TO UNDERREPRESENTED VOICES IN WASHTENAW COUNTY,
PROMOTING AN ACTION TO BUILD A JUST, CARING AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETY.

Groundcover News, a 501(c)(3) organization, was founded in April 2010 as a means to empower low-income persons to make the transitions from homeless to housed, and from jobless to employed.

Vendors purchase each copy of our regular editions of Groundcover News at our office for 50 cents. This money goes toward production costs. Vendors work selling the paper on the street for \$2, keeping all income and tips from each sale.

Street papers like Groundcover News exist in cities all over the United States, as well as in more than 40 other countries, in an effort to raise awareness of the plight of homeless people and combat the increase in poverty. Our paper is a proud member of the International Network of Street Papers.

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Size	Black/White	Color	Dimensions (W x H in inches)
1/8	\$110.00	\$150.00	5 X 3 or 2.5 X 6.5
1/6	\$145.00	\$200.00	5 X 4
1/4	\$200.00	\$265.00	5 X 6.25
1/2	\$375.00	\$500.00	5 X 13 or 10.25 X 6.5
full page	\$650.00	\$900.00	10.25 X 13

PACKAGE PRICING

Three Months/Six Issues: **15%** off
Six Months/Twelve Issues: **25%** off
Full Year/Twenty-four Issues: **35%** off
Only run for two weeks/one issue: **40%** off
Additional **20%** discount for money saving coupons

MEET YOUR VENDOR



Pony Bush,
vendor No. 305

**Where do you usually sell
Groundcover News?**
4th Ave and Liberty Street.

**When and why did you start
selling Groundcover News?**
In 2016. I needed money.

**What is your favorite thing to do
in Ann Arbor?** Sell Groundcover
News and make money.

What words do you live by?
Don't do something in 50 seconds
that will get you 50 years.

**What motivates you to work
hard selling Groundcover News?**
The struggle.

**If you could do anything for a
day, what would it be?**
Travel the world.

**If you had to eat one meal for
the rest of your life, what would
it be?** A beef rib.

What is your superpower?
Dressing fresh.

What was your first job?
Groundcover.

What are your hobbies?
Biking.

**What changes would you like to
see in Washtenaw County?**
More places for the homeless to
stay at. More low-income housing.
Put a shelter in Ypsi!

**What would be the first thing
you'd do if you won the lottery?**
I'd build a place for the homeless.

What is your pet peeve?
When Groundcover vendors or
panhandlers try to take my corner.

Sofina's birth story

**TABITHA LUDWIG
Groundcover vendor No. 360**

January 4, 2015, I was 37 weeks pregnant. I woke up, went to the bathroom and I was bleeding. It was also my daughter Angel's fourth birthday but since I was bleeding, I called my dad and told him it was time to go to the hospital. I was having contractions and it was just time to go.

So my dad came and got me, my son and my children's dad and we went to the hospital. My dad kept my son and dropped me and their dad off at the hospital. We was there for a couple of hours. Then my contractions slowed down so they told me I'd most likely be having the baby that night, at the latest the next day and then sent me home.

So my dad came and picked us up and took us home. My son went to my daughter's birthday party and I stayed home having contractions.

The last thing I ate was jalapeno poppers and that night I was looking at old pics and the contractions kept getting worse. The baby's father got tired of me crying and screaming in pain because he was trying to watch a movie and told me to shut up or go back to the hospital. So I got up and went to the bathroom.

I was crying; I was in so much pain. They was coming back-to-back so I called my dad again to come and get me. By the time my dad came and got me, I could hardly move. My children's father

got our son in the car and sat in the car while my dad helped me once I got down my stairs and made it to my dad's car. I had another contraction and my water broke.

Yes, this was my third child. But the first and only time that my water ever broke on its own. So I got scared because my children before her came not long after my water broke. So my dad finally got me into the car. With me freaking out and not knowing what to do, and the first really bad snowstorm of the year, we made it about 10 minutes down the street. And my baby started to come out. I kept yelling saying she was coming out and my dad was already stressed. He kept yelling at me and telling me to just breathe because it is just a contraction and I have had kids before.

I was scared because I had pants, underwear and a pad on so once I felt her head pop out, I did not know if she would be able to breathe. My dad was not believing me. So to protect my child, I pulled



Left: **Sofina and Tabitha**. Right: **Sofina on her birth day**.

my pants and underwear down. My dad finally pulled over and my daughter was born in a parking lot at CVS on Michigan Ave in Ypsilanti.

My dad actually cried when he realized I was not lying and she was being born. He called 911 and by the time they got to us, she was in my arms. Her father came into the back seat, seen her dangling out of me, got nervous and just pulled her out himself instead of letting me finish pushing her out. But problems started arising because the placenta had not been delivered. So once we all got to the hospital, the doctors all surrounded me instead of the baby and my 7-year-old son was very confused at why all the doctors was around me instead of his baby sister. She was born at six pounds.

The doctors were finally able to get me to deliver the placenta. And everything was just fine afterwards. She was very beautiful. Mommy loves you Sofina!



**Sports recap: Michigan Wolverines
Women's Tennis May 4 and 5**

**HOSEA HILL
Groundcover vendor No. 532**

I attended the free admission NCAA first and second rounds women's tennis matches at Varsity Tennis Center.

It was a joy to be in the relaxed environment of VTC and I loved watching these women compete on the courts. During my observation, I learned that Michigan produced a reasonably good team.

The University of Michigan women's tennis team had their highest NCAA tournament seed (No. 3

seed) in program history, and Michigan and Chicago State made history due to this being the first time they were meeting each other.

Player Highlight: University of Michigan tennis player Kari Miller (senior) from Ann Arbor has tied the consecutive win matches (2) and the win she had versus Notre Dame on May 5 marked her 95th career victory which puts Miller in the top ten in Michigan program history. I will be attending the May 11 game versus Miami Hurricanes and I'll do an update from that match.



Hosea Hill and Kari Miller

Ann Arbor Tenants Union and POTUS push back on junk fees

Formed in 1968 to push back against unfair rental policy and practices, the Ann Arbor Tenants Union fought for tenants' rights such as fair and affordable rent, addressing code violations, and in general keeping landlords in check. After losing funding in 2004, the AATU faded. Recently though, the rental landscape in Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti has gotten out of control. Now led by Julia Goode and Zackarian Farah, the revived AATU has returned to the battlefield.

On April 27, The Ann Arbor Tenants Union put together a rally outside of Ann Arbor City Hall to protest the exorbitant fees landlords are charging Ann Arbor renters. These "junk fees" are riders that are charged along with the usual security deposit and rent. Usually these fees are charged after the lease is signed, but some of them are applied before there is even a guarantee a unit will be available. Navigating the fees makes apartment hunting a harrowing experience. Shopping is difficult because the high application and move-in costs limit the number of places a renter can apply. The fees are not generally disclosed before signing the lease, so the apartment you thought you could afford at the time of signing is now out of your range. For someone of modest means, this can spell eviction.



JIM CLARK
Groundcover vendor No. 139

The AATU is not alone. In a press release from July of 2023, the Biden-Harris administration announced it is taking a stand on junk fees as well. The action stems from the fact that millions of families pay more than rent and utilities when leasing a dwelling. The most common is a non-refundable application fee. Background and credit check costs are also transferred to the potential renter, also non-refundable.

As detailed in the National Consumer Law Center Report "TOO DAMN HIGH, How Junk Fees Add to Skyrocketing Rents," there is even something called a "January Fee" which is imposed during January, because it's January. The most expensive junk fee is a place-holding fee. A place-holding fee is a charge to be put on a waitlist for a unit. Place-holding fees can be as high as \$6,000, are also

non-refundable, and do not always guarantee a spot. Biden's plan to manage junk fees includes compelling rental platforms such as Zillow to be transparent about extra fees.

Unfortunately, a Texas judge issued an injunction on May 10 blocking implementation of the Consumer Protection Financial Bureau's move to cap credit card fees at eight dollars per month. "Every month that the credit card late fee rule is blocked will cost Americans over \$800 million," the White House said following the ruling.

In the HUD publication "Policy & Practice," aimed at municipalities, other strategies being rolled out are capping or eliminating application fees, allowing renters to provide their own screening reports, allowing a single application fee to cover multiple applications, limiting allowable fees on deposits at the time of move-in or lease signing, and clearly identifying bottom-line amounts that tenants will pay for move-in and monthly rent.

Individual states are also making changes to rental policy. Rhode Island does not allow an application fee to cost more than a background and credit check, and that's only if the prospective renter does not provide their own reports. Connecticut

prohibits application fees and caps background checks at \$50. The state also requires all fees and monthly rent on advertisements and the first page of a lease agreement, and prohibits move-in/move-out fees. As for Michigan, the Michigan Law Policy Program made, a presentation to the Michigan House Housing Subcommittee in February 2024. In the section titled "Possible Rental Housing Policy Responses," these are listed as potential strategies:

- protecting source of income
- expunging or sealing eviction convictions
- creating a standard rental application process
- rethinking traditional housing policy such as allowing Accessory Dwelling Units
- limiting or prohibiting junk fees.

In a March article from CBS, Ann Arbor councilmember Erica Briggs said, "The Renters Commission is currently working on drafting legislation that would change our ordinances so that this (junk fees) would no longer be allowed in the city," The Ann Arbor Renters Commission was established by City Council to be an advisory board consisting of a demographic cross section of renters.

What's missing in the debate on housing?

J. PAINE

Groundcover contributor

It seems like common sense these days that the cost of housing is too high. Following on the heels of this observation is a chorus of problem solvers who, consulting "Basic Economics," are quick to remind us that it is because "supply is too low." The answer is therefore, simply, to "build more supply" (buildings).

For the rest of us, the solution is to wait for this to happen, and hope that it solves the problem some amount of years or decades down the line. At the same time, these problem solvers leave so much unsaid:

- Social housing such as that in Vienna, Austria, is cheaper and more desirable by residents than purely market-rate housing.
- Co-op housing is cheaper for residents for the same type of housing, while it builds equity for those

residents and offers more direct control over one's home and community.

- Monthly rental payments often cost more than mortgage payments would, while tenants are denied mortgage loans of the same amount they are already paying every month for rent!
- Five million millionaires and 500+ new billionaires were created during the Covid19 pandemic, and existing billionaires got richer, just as corporate profits soared under the guise of "inflation" and a "labor shortage."
- Half a trillion dollars or more was injected into the banking system after the financial crash of 2008, given as corporate bailouts, and a similar plan was enacted during the Covid19 pandemic. Perhaps the predatory system of financial speculation and corporate irresponsibility has something to do with the high interest rates and "inflation" that have raised the cost of housing and everything else – though these

problems are rarely mentioned as being a cause of the "housing crisis."

- According to Propublica, corporate real estate firms have been colluding and fixing prices, using proprietary software to jack up rents and costs for home-buyers.
- Rent strikes, tenant unions, and more political actions have lowered housing costs for residents throughout history, and could do so again, without any change in the supply of housing.
- Real estate developers and investors have an incentive to keep profits high, not reduce the cost of housing for everyone else. These incentives more than overwhelm the facile models of supply and demand that are supposed to bring down costs by increasing supply.
- Finally, and ultimately to blame, is a system of housing as a system of investment, rather than a system geared around providing a basic

human necessity. The cost of housing will hardly go down over time *when it is good and economically-important for those who own current housing for the price to go up!*

It is a wonder why the proponents of basic economics and common sense are leaving out such critical analyses and range of solutions to the current crisis. Nevertheless, we need a new economics and new common sense for the housing crisis – one that looks at all the factors and parties responsible, and explores all available options.

Ultimately, there must be a transfer of power of economic decision-making from the wealthy and large financial institutions — who approach housing as a commodity and an investment — to regular people who need homes for basic living. Only then can more significant changes be implemented that would meaningfully tackle the crisis for most of us.

Tenant Talk: Fool me twice, shame on monopoly landlords — still!

AJ STANDISH

Groundcover contributor

Ypsilanti is a city where around 70% of the population rent a place to live. It's also a city where the rental market has been monopolized by one rental company in particular that is notorious in the community for being exploitative and lazy about all maintenance and care. The company, which I won't name here, buys older houses and buildings but refuses to maintain them, forcing tenants to put up with terrible conditions with little to no maintenance or response.

I spoke to one tenant, who I'll call Crawford, about their experiences with renting from this company. Crawford has lived in two of the company's apartments. The first thing they noticed in their first apartment was that the walls were shaped very abnormally.

"On the day that I moved in, [the walls] were probably bulging out from the wall about two inches at the max length, like, it was substantial, it was a huge breakage, it was probably six feet by four feet tall, and it was right up in the bedroom," Crawford said. "And I made note of it, and I sent pictures to my landlord. And [it was] total radio silence, they didn't tell me if the service request had been even received."

Crawford's apartment was directly above the building's laundry room. They said that mold was a huge concern along with the sagging walls, and that the entire unit, floor to ceiling, was wet to the touch. During their time there, they lived in fear that something would happen within the walls, a burst pipe, or the walls finally giving way to the bowing. Already overwhelmed with these concerns, Crawford started to notice scurrying and crawling noises.

"I found out that there were mice all over the apartment. And there was actually a hole below the radiator that they had been coming in. And out of that was just a place that was missing a slot. And I had made note of it and sent in a service request and did not receive any communication back."

As the year went on, Crawford was having a really dark time. One ray of light for them was adopting a cat who lived outdoors with a cat colony, who they named Jane. Crawford says that Jane adopted them, not the other way around. Taking care of

Jane and developing their bond was a distraction from the day to day stressors of living in their apartment. For example, when winter came, things got very cold.

"December is about when I found out that my radiator didn't even turn on. It was there, it wouldn't work. And my bedroom had no heat source. It looked like there used to be a radiator, you could feel the stubs where they cut it and welded it off. But there was no heat source in my room," Crawford said.

I'm only scratching the surface of the issues Crawford faced in their first apartment in this article.

Their next one, about a year and a new cat later, was managed by the same rental company. It contained a whole new variety of issues. First, their entire kitchen floor was covered in mold.

It became a daily routine, scrubbing mold off the floor with bleach after working long hours everyday while trying to repair other things in the apartment. At the same time, Crawford was taking care of a new sick cat and trying to look after the first one, who was getting sicker, having contracted an illness from the new cat. Despite their efforts keeping the two apart, and doing their best with the mold, Jane got very sick, to the point where Crawford was afraid she would need to be put down.

These worries were intensified when, in response to a roach issue, the rental company put poison all over the floors.

"She was especially fragile because she had gotten to a point where I almost had to euthanize her and I ended up having to spend \$3,500 just to keep her. And the leasing company was aware, they were aware she was immunocompromised."

Crawford had sent an email to the company informing them of Jane's condition, but they didn't listen.

"These little white tablets that I still find and it has been half of a year. These little white tablets that are roach poison, and these little roach traps. And I was talking to the people who live in a different apartment. And they're like, yeah, our dog ate some. And I found [my cats] playing with them. And this is the, you know, this is something, this is a poison, that it's toxic. Like it will make them sick."

Around the time their cat was very sick, Crawford decided to pursue

veterinary medicine, stating this horrible experience as a "driving force."

"Actually it was part of what got me into veterinary medicine was her getting sick and being like, I respect the people that are saving my cat's life right now."

Another glaring health hazard in the second apartment is the presence of several squirrels' nests in the roof, right above Crawford's bed. Every night they fall asleep to the echo of scurrying squirrels.

"Squirrels live in that insulation, and they've been building nests over top of my bed and the slats there are shifting. And now there's a gap where squirrel feces and bedding is falling into my bed."

Finally, the rental company responded to Crawford and the slats were patched up with caulk in a way that was ineffective.

The cherry on top of the squirrel horror story happened when one of the squirrels fell through the slats, and ended up stuck in the wall. Due to the lack of response from the rental company, Crawford was forced to listen to the squirrel struggle to climb back up for days and days, until it eventually died. As it decomposed in the wall, Crawford's apartment smelled like rotting meat. Again, there was no response from the rental company.

Crawford works 50+ hours a week as a vet tech, for only 16 dollars an hour. Both of these apartments cost them about \$1,000 monthly, so they had to work constantly just to afford moldy, cold, poisonous, rodent-infested and broken living quarters. Trying to bring some brightness to the situation, Crawford planted several plants outside, all of which were weedwacked by the rental company.

Crawford's story is one of very, very many in the Ypsilanti area. This rental company is risking people's lives, gambling with severe health concerns, dangerous maintenance negligence, and complete disregard for the health and safety of tenants who rent from them.

People shouldn't have to battle water damage, rodents, dying squirrels, and parts of squirrel nest in their bed. Nobody should have to contemplate euthanizing their cat, their best friend, because of health concerns created by the people in charge of their housing.

What's Happening at the Ann Arbor District Library

Open 10am–8pm Daily

Hang out in any of our five locations across town, browsing books, magazines, newspapers, and more, or check out movies, CDs, art prints, musical instruments, and home tools—you name it! Study and meeting rooms, fast and free WiFi, and plenty of places to sit and hang out.

Unusual Stuff to Borrow

There's more to borrow at AADL than books, music, and movies. To name a few, there are games, telescopes, stories-to-go kits, and home tools. Check out these unusual yet handy items during your next library visit.

Book Clubs To Go

Book Clubs To Go is a service available at each AADL location that provides the convenience of complete kits for book discussions. Inside, you'll find 10 copies of the featured book, one movie DVD, and a resource folder. Request a kit today through the online catalog or by calling (734) 327-4200.

FEATURED EVENT

A2CAF

Saturday, June 15 &

Sunday, June 16 • 10am–6pm

Downtown Library

A2CAF (Ann Arbor Comic Arts Festival) is a two-day extravaganza for comic lovers of all ages; featuring workshops, art activities, and one-on-one interactions between comics readers and makers. Join us at the Downtown Library to explore a packed artist alley, hear from renowned authors and illustrators, and get creative with quick drawing sessions, face painting, and so much more! Check out the full schedule of A2CAF events at aadl.org/a2caf.

Mental health advocates call for transparency, reduced funding for Washtenaw County Sheriff in Community Mental Health Public Safety Millage

On Wednesday May 15, the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners held a first reading of the proposal to restore and renew the Mental Health and Public Safety Millage on the November 5, 2024 General Election Ballot. This proposal, originally scheduled for earlier in April, was pushed back a month after mental health advocates and others mobilized against its renewal. Advocacy throughout the months of April and May spurred the updating of an ordinance that governs the millage. The May 15 meeting also included a public hearing on the ordinance and first reading on the millage renewal.

2017 Community Mental Health and Public Safety Preservation Millage

A millage is a tax levied against taxable property; it is a common way for municipalities to raise money to fund specific projects or address certain issues. In November 2017, Washtenaw County residents voted two-to-one in favor of an eight-year millage that would generate \$15 - \$18 million per year for mental health and public safety.

Per the ballot language, “38% [of the funding] shall be allocated to Washtenaw County’s Community Mental Health Department for mental health services, stabilization, and prevention and to meet mental health needs in an appropriate setting thus reducing the burden in the jail and improving care; 38% shall be allocated to the Washtenaw County Sheriff’s Office to ensure continued operations and increased collaboration with the mental health community; and 24% shall be allocated to jurisdictions in the County which maintain their own police force.”

As written and implemented, the 38% allocated to CMH is guided by a Millage Advisory Committee. This 13-member advisory committee is a subcommittee of the Washtenaw County Community Mental Health Board and reports to the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners as required. Although they meet during the workday and have low public attendance, MAC meetings are open to the public and include a forum for public comments.

Many Washtenaw residents are familiar with this millage from the local “It takes a millage” marketing



LINDSAY CALKA
Publisher

campaign, which has highlighted services funded and expanded by the CMH Public Safety millage. A 2022 Impact Report issued by WCCMH displays financial, demographic and human-centered testimonials of the impact of the dollars — and can be readily viewed online with a quick Google search.

Yet, the CMH spending is only a minority of the millage expenditures. Neither the 38% allocated to WCSO nor the 24% to municipal police forces — totalling 62% of the millage budget allocation — have advisory / oversight councils or impact reports. Information about the expenditures of the Sheriff’s budget in 2024 had to be ordered via private FOIA (which cost \$938) and will not be received until June 7, two days after the proposed second reading and vote to put the millage on the ballot. (53% of the County’s general four-year budget is already allocated to the Sheriff.)

Mental health advocates spark public debate

In County Commissioner meetings throughout the months of March and April, mental health advocates — representing people receiving community mental health services, community mental health workers, activists and formerly incarcerated and homeless people — spoke for and against the current millage, greatly calling into question the future of the millage if sent to ballot for renewal “as-is.”

Supporters of the renewal spoke in favor of the programs the millage funded in and out of the Sheriff’s department — such as SURE Moms and Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion and Deflection (LEADD) — citing the great need for maintained funding for mental health services.

Those who oppose moving forward “as-is” are in agreement that there is

a great need for mental health services, but call for two main alternatives: split or slow down.

The call to “split” suggests that the Commissioners scrap this millage and run two new millages on the November 5, 2024 ballot: one for mental health and one for public safety. Even if both of these millages fail, the Commissioners could place the renewal of the 2017 Mental Health and Public Safety Millage on a ballot in 2025. If passed, no programs or services would lapse in funding. (Since the eight year millage began collection in 2018, the funding is able to be spent through December 2026.)

The call to “slow down” is one for increased transparency and public communications around the budgeting, governance and expenditures of the millage from 2017-present. More time would allow design and execution of community-based processes to gather and utilize public opinion on the millage, and even grant the flexibility to rewrite the millage or an ordinance that improves millage spending priorities and guidelines. Many times commenters called on the BOC to be creative and not rush through a decision that will cement policy until 2033.

Ordinance adds oversight not budget changes

The Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners moved forward with a third option: ordinance guidance. The “Community Mental Health and Public Safety Preservation Millage Expenditure Policy Ordinance” was draft-updated to impose regulations on the “public safety” portion of the millage funds.

One notable (draft) suggestion was writing in limitations on how the 38-38-24 breakdowns would be spent. The ordinance draft read, “50% of annual millage funding [allocated to the Washtenaw County Sheriff’s Office] will be used in a proactive manner to provide services to help individuals with needs related to: Mental and Behavioral Health Services (20%), Housing and Homelessness Support Services (15%) and Community Violence Interruption (15%).”

The ordinance also establishes a Public Safety Millage Advisory Committee, which would be a 16-member body and under this ordinance three

(3) of the seats will be occupied by members of the Board of Commissioners.

After both public comment held at the beginning of the meeting, and a public hearing later in the May 15 meeting, where commenters generally disapproved of the ordinance for entrenching social service access in the carceral system, the Commissioners debated on whether or not to further limit the Sheriff’s allocation in any way. Only Commissioners Yousef Rabhi, Annie Somerville, and Katie Scott voted in favor of keeping these sub-percentage limits. The majority voted to scrap the 20-15-15% sub-breakdown.

This May 15 vote served as a reminder that ordinances can be repealed or amended at any time, and that placing budget protections in such a fickle type of policy is not a viable solution to ensure funding for social services.

Take action

Advocacy mobilizations at the Board of Commissioners meetings in 2024 have been defined by Shelter Now, Community Mental Health workers’ contract bargaining and now this millage: all of which call for a County budget that is better reflective of the needs of the community. Community members, coalitions and grassroots organizations have spoken passionately about the life and death impacts of these policies.

At the time of publication, the vote determining whether the millage renewal will appear on the November 5 ballot and how the updated ordinance will govern it will be held on June 5 — during the next Board of Commissioners meeting (220 N Main Street, Ann Arbor and on Zoom <https://washtenaw.me/BOCZoom>). Call or email your District’s elected Commissioner and let them know what mental health and public safety looks like to you.

Washtenaw County ID for you and me

In many ways, identification cards serve as gateways to various services and opportunities. Washtenaw County, nestled in the rusty heart of Michigan, recognizes the significance of accessible identification for its residents. The Washtenaw County ID program is not merely a piece of plastic; it embodies inclusivity, safety and community support. Let’s delve into the essential aspects of this initiative, focusing on its role in accessibility and safety.

The Washtenaw County ID program was established to ensure that every resident, regardless of their background or circumstances, has access to a valid form of identification. This initiative is particularly beneficial for individuals who may face barriers in obtaining traditional forms of ID, such as driver’s licenses or state IDs. These individuals are often the most vulnerable in our society and obtaining a valid ID can assist them in gaining the next steps toward independent lives.

Accessibility lies at the core of the program. By providing an alternative to conventional identification methods, the County aims to reach marginalized communities, including undocumented immigrants, homeless individuals, and those experiencing financial hardship. The process of obtaining an ID is designed to be straightforward and accommodating, ensuring that everyone has the chance to obtain this vital document.

I spoke to Ryan Heisler, the website developer for the Washtenaw County ID Project. He stated “We wanted to make the website available for any user. We followed the WCAG (web content accessible guidelines) to ensure that everyone, on any device could comfortably use the site.”

Inclusivity goes beyond the act of issuing IDs; it encompasses the



ROBBIE FEBRUARY
Groundcover contributor

recognition and validation of individuals’ identities and circumstances. The Washtenaw County ID includes features that cater to diverse needs, such as an alert system indicating that the cardholder may have a medical condition. This alert serves as a safeguard, ensuring that relevant information is readily available in case of emergencies, and promoting a safer community for all residents.

The inclusion of many residents in the Washtenaw County ID program reflects the county’s commitment to fostering a sense of community and solidarity among its residents. It not only enhances individual safety but also strengthens the collective resilience of the community. The journey towards accessibility involves more than just providing a service; it requires a concerted effort to understand and address the diverse needs of the community.

Ryan Heisler spoke to this as well. He said “It’s been such an important project for me. There are thousands of people in the community who struggle with the requirements of traditional state issued identification. Washtenaw ID provides a path for them to receive services locally.” The Washtenaw County ID program exemplifies this approach by offering

multiple avenues for obtaining and utilizing IDs.

Mobile outreach initiatives may bring ID services directly to communities, removing transportation barriers and reaching individuals who may face difficulties accessing traditional government offices. Additionally, partnerships with local organizations and service providers extend the reach of the program, ensuring that information and support are readily available to those in need. Furthermore, the Washtenaw County ID is accepted at various institutions and businesses within the County, affirming its validity and utility as a form of identification. From healthcare facilities to financial institutions, the ID opens doors to essential services and resources, empowering residents to fully participate in community life.

In Washtenaw County, the ID card symbolizes inclusivity, safety and community solidarity. By serving as proof of identity and residency, the Washtenaw County ID program prioritizes accessibility and safety for all residents. As we navigate the complexities of the modern world, initiatives like the Washtenaw County ID remind us of the importance of removing barriers and fostering inclusivity. By working together to support and empower every member of the community, we can create a safer, more accessible environment where all individuals have the opportunity to thrive.

Scan the QR code pictured right to visit the Washtenaw ID website, <https://washtenaw.local-gov.id>, where you can now report businesses that reject use of the ID and learn more about getting one yourself!

A2AC Event
ARTINI
JUNE 21, 2024

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A2AC
THE ANN ARBOR ART CENTER

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— Christ Jesus (John 8:42)

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- share what we have
- care for creation
- grow in faith

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Woman



A woman is a beautiful being
A woman who is truthful and honest
is an asset to us as well as our communities
She cares about her duties towards those who on her lean
To do otherwise is cruel and mean
So be a truthful and honest woman
One who builds, not destroys dreams

A day in the life of Earl

EARL PULLEN
Groundcover contributor

Before one's nature
Can get in the way
It's how you live from day
To day the dreams you have
And the story is told it's
How you mind and how you
Hold the memories you have
And the story is told
Only time can tell of
The days of old. In the
Days and nights of time
Recollect — its all you can
Do to get respect

A night in the life of Earl

EARL PULLEN

Hither hither
Thither thither
A morning light
Is neither neither
What you say is nether
Or light but all your dreams
Come at night
And the hither or the
thither is never
Right so the
Story is told
For a day and a night
And a night

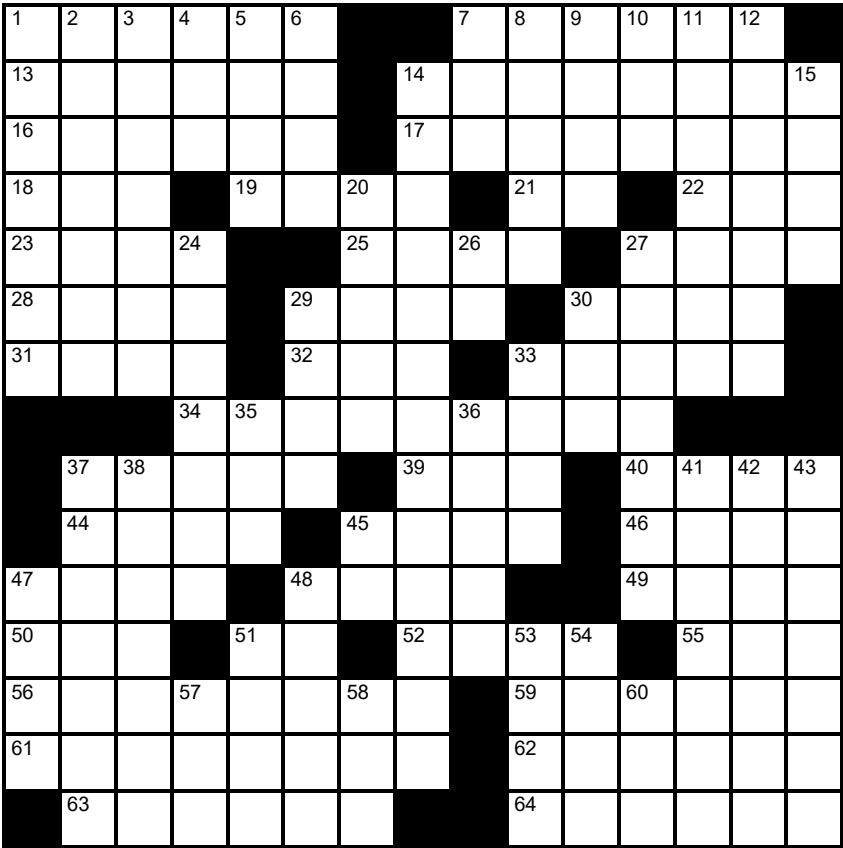
Sudoku ★★★★★ 4puz.com

8			7		4			6
			4	6		5	3	
1								8
7	5	9				8	4	3
	1						6	
4	8	6				7	1	2
9								5
			3	2		8	1	
5			9		3			7

Fill in the squares so that each row, column, and 3-by-3 box contain the numbers 1 through 9.

CROSSWORD

from the International Network of Street Papers



- ACROSS

 - 1. Corner store
 - 7. Cite as evidence
 - 13. Made square
 - 14. Congenial
 - 16. Led
 - 17. Ornamental purple flower
 - 18. Make a mistake
 - 19. Part of GPS (Abbr.)
 - 21. ___ Havre, French seaport
 - 22. Neck accessory
 - 23. "Smart" one
 - 25. Confined, with "up"
 - 27. Defensive spray
 - 28. Gossip, slang
 - 29. 007
 - 30. Cast a ballot
 - 31. "La Scala di ___" (Rossini opera)
 - 32. Not at home
 - 33. ___ Rapids, Iowa
 - 34. Viking weapon
 - 37. Of dairy cows
 - 39. What might come before the chicken
 - 40. Barber's motion
 - 44. "Don't bet ___!"
 - 45. Part of TLC
 - 46. Ditty
 - 47. "What are the ___?"
 - 48. Information unit
 - 49. Swerves at sea
 - 50. Something old, something ___
 - 51. Yes, in Spanish
 - 52. Disliked, in a text (Abbr.)
 - 55. After expenses
 - 56. Upholster's heavy, floral friend
 - 59. Scalawag
 - 61. One working at a copy shop, maybe
 - 62. Ace place?
 - 63. "___ Roots"
 - 64. Looked after, with "to"
- DOWN

 - 1. Decapitates
 - 2. Cover
 - 3. Honey
 - 4. Armageddon
 - 5. Orders to plow horses
 - 6. Mark of "Game of Thrones"
 - 7. Austrian river
 - 8. Gave out, as cards
 - 9. "Truth or ___"
 - 10. "Born in the ___"
 - 11. Choral composition
 - 12. Siren
 - 14. Shiny shoe material
 - 15. Old-fashioned "you"
 - 20. Shoot off one's mouth
 - 24. White Burgundy wine
 - 26. Bismarck st.
 - 27. Demureness
 - 29. The two of them
 - 30. Annoy
 - 33. Hamster's home
 - 35. Division of a play
 - 36. "Snowy" bird
 - 37. Contemporary people
 - 38. Lived inside, as a spirit
 - 41. Multifaceted
 - 42. Incorporate something into a fabric
 - 43. Crushed into a powder
 - 45. Famous baseball pitcher Young
 - 47. "___ bitten, twice shy"
 - 48. Pig out
 - 51. Achy
 - 53. At one time, at one time
 - 54. Valley
 - 57. Toni Morrison's "___ Baby"
 - 58. Nothin' but ___!
 - 60. Merkley or Wyden, e.g. (Abbr.)

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While Groundcover is a non-profit, and paper vendors are self-employed contractors, we still have expectations of how vendors should conduct themselves while selling and representing the paper.

The following is our **Vendor Code of Conduct**, which every vendor reads and signs before receiving a badge and papers. We request that if you discover a vendor violating any tenets of the Code, please contact us and provide as many details as possible. Our paper and our vendors should be positively impacting our County.

- Groundcover will be distributed for a voluntary donation. I agree not to ask for more than the cover price or solicit donations by any other means.
- When selling Groundcover, I will always have the current biweekly issue of Groundcover available for customer purchase.
- I agree not to sell additional goods or products when selling the paper or to panhandle, including panhandling with only one paper or selling past monthly issues.
- I will wear and display my badge when selling papers and refrain from wearing it or other Groundcover gear when engaged in other activities.
- I will only purchase the paper from Groundcover Staff and will not sell to or buy papers from other

Groundcover vendors, especially vendors who have been suspended or terminated.

- I agree to treat all customers, staff, and other vendors respectfully. I will not "hard sell," threaten, harass or pressure customers, staff, or other vendors verbally or physically.
- I will not sell Groundcover under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- I understand that I am not a legal employee of Groundcover but a contracted worker responsible for my own well-being and income.
- I understand that my badge is property of Groundcover and will not deface it. I will present my badge when purchasing the papers.
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- I understand to refrain from selling on public buses, federal property or stores unless there is permission from the owner.
- I agree to stay at least one block away from another vendor in downtown areas. I will also abide by the Vendor Corner Policy.
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If you would like to report a violation of the Vendor Code please email contact@groundcovernews.com or fill out the contact form on our website.

Rediscovering Zora Neale Hurston’s literary achievements

The story of Zora Neale Hurston represents the third volume of our attempts to bring to our readers the narrative of early Black writers and artists who have left their monumental footprints on the “sands of time.” A few things are notable about Zora Neale Hurston, author of “Their Eyes Were Watching God.” First, Hurston and some of the other early Black writers and artists were once famous for their writing, and subsequently, they were forgotten. Second, Zora Neale Hurston’s work and contribution to the canon of Black literary tradition had to be rediscovered by newer generations of African American writers. Third, Hurston lived through poverty and died in a Florida welfare home for the elderly poor. There was no gravestone on her gravesite. In 1973, Writer Alice Walker traveled to Florida to see where she was buried. She discovered that she was put in an unmarked grave. Walker quickly arranged to have a stone marker installed. It said, “ZORA NEALE HURSTON: GENIUS OF THE SOUTH.”

It is fair to single out Walker and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., as people who played significant roles in the rediscovery of Zora Neale Hurston. Many writers in the literary community credit Alice Walker for her 1975 article titled, “Where is Zora Neale Hurston?” This question got many answers, including a 1979 article by Henry Louis Gates Jr. which lauded Hurston’s literary and scholarly achievements. Professor Gates pointed out that her distinctive style of writing should not be condemned, but celebrated as a cultural and historical aesthetic. More recently, a



2022 book titled, “Zora Neale Hurston: You Don’t Know Us Negroes and Other Essays” was edited by Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Genevieve West. In one review of Hurston’s “Dust Tracks on a Road,” Gates said, “How was Hurston — the recipient of two Guggenheim fellowships and the author of four novels, a dozen short essays, two musicals, two books on Black mythology, dozens of essays and a prize-winning author biography — lost from all but her most loyal followers for two full decades?” Gates continued, “There is no easy answer to this question. It is clear however, that the enthusiastic responses that Hurston’s work engenders today were not shared by several of her black male contemporaries.” Does it go back to this thought?

Zora Neale Hurston (1891-1960)

Zora Neale Hurston was born in Alabama in January 1891. She died in January 1960. When she was three years old, her family moved to Florida. She was raised in a predominantly Black town in Florida called Eatonville. She

went to a high school at Morgan College in Baltimore. Subsequently, she entered Howard University in Washington D.C., where she studied writing, Latin, Greek and public speaking. After two years, she received an Associate Degree.

Barnard College offered her a scholarship to study anthropology at their New York City campus. She accepted. She had an opportunity to learn from the distinguished cultural anthropologist, Franz Boas, and the well-known anthropologist Margaret Mead was one of her classmates. Hurston received her B.A. in Anthropology in 1925 at the age of 28. She continued her education at Columbia University graduate school. Boas, her research adviser, helped her secure several research grants and fellowships.

During her stay at Barnard College and Columbia University, Hurston lived in a Harlem apartment which became a meeting place for young poets and writers such as Langston Hughes, Gwendolyn Bennett and Countee Cullen. They were able to get dozens of poems and stories published in “Fire” and “Opportunity” magazines during the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and 1930s. Zora Neale Hurston’s stories and Langston Hughes’s poems appeared in the iconic anthology book of Alain Locke titled, “The New Negro.”

Hurston wrote four books and more than 50 stories. She traveled to Jamaica and Haiti to do folklore anthropological research. Many of her research materials are now being dug up and published posthumously. Hurston’s 1927 interview of Cudjo Lewis who was in the last ship that brought African slaves to the shores of Mobile, Alabama, was finally published posthumously in 2018. The highly acclaimed book is called, “The Barracoon” (more below).

Of all the great books written by Zora Neale Hurston, the greatest is, “Their Eyes Were Watching God.” Newer editions have been republished by the University of Illinois Press. The Illinois Press also published new editions of Robert Hemingway’s “Zora Neale Hurston: A Literary Biography” and Jennifer L. Freeman’s “Ain’t I an Anthropologist?”

Conclusion

Professor Gates called out the three main critics of Zora Neale Hurston’s body of work. They were Richard Wright, Sterling A. Brown and Ralph Ellison. Their reviews of Hurston’s

writings during the 1930s through the 1950s were brutal. The attacks on Hurston’s writing style and literary perspectives were merciless. The harsh reviews probably forced Hurston to hide away.

About the harsh criticism, Henry Louis Gates said, “In reviews of ‘Mules and Men’ (1935), ‘Their Eyes Were Watching God’ (1937) and ‘Moses: Man of the Mountain’ (1939), Sterling A. Brown, Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison condemned her work as ‘socially unconscious’ and derided her ‘minstrel technique’ in ‘Moses.’ Ellison concluded, ‘For Negro fiction, it did nothing.’”

Gates continued, “Hurston’s mythic realism, lush and dense with a lyrical black idiom, was regarded as counter revolutionary by the proponents of social realism ...” Hurston competed with her Black male contemporaries “for the right to determine the ideal fictional mode for representing Negro life.” Gates also made one final prophetic remark about the controversy. He said, “She lost the battle, but may yet win the war.”

Alice Walker, who won the Pulitzer Prize for “The Color Purple,” helped to get Zora Neale Hurston’s unpublished manuscript published. The manuscript was based on a 1927 interview of the last surviving slave who was brought to the port of Mobile, Alabama in 1865. Hurston interviewed 87-year old Cudjo Lewis in Afrika Town, near Mobile, Alabama in 1927. Lewis answered Hurston’s questions in a unique Black Southern vernacular and folklore English language reminiscent of the 19th century style by Black Poet Paul Lawrence Dunbar. It was and it is still called, “Black English.” The book, by Hurston titled, “Barracoon: The Story of the last Black Cargo” was published in 2018. It received great reviews from the New York Times, Time Magazine, PBS, etc. Nobel Prize winner Toni Morrison said, “One of the greatest writers of our time.” Alice Walker said, “Zora Neale Hurston’s genius has once again produced a masterpiece.”

Finally the world knows that Hurston has inspired many writers to use their inner courage to write and, of course, share their private feelings in public places. That is what poets and fiction/non-fiction writers do. Zora Neale Hurston’s legacy and impacts are staggering. Several award-winning writers including Walker, Morrison and Maya Angelou give effusive gratitude to Miss Hurston for their writing success, fame and recognition.

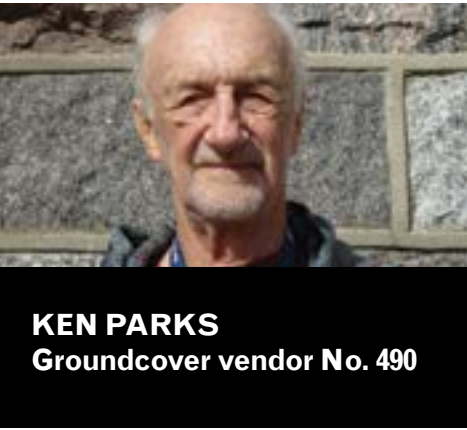
People's Peace Bank is an idea whose time has come

The first meeting of the People’s Peace Bank on Earth Day this year was canceled so we could attend the rally and camp for Palestine on the Diag. Money and war are so fixed in the global political economy that the struggle for peace may be ready for a breakthrough in theory and practice.

Using the word “people’s” does not mean public. The Bank of North Dakota is the only publicly-owned state bank in the United States. In my view they are one kind of people’s bank. The Michigan legislature is considering one. The People’s Peace Bank I propose would be local. The mission would be to invest in peace. Anything that promoted a simple and true lifestyle would be worthy of investment. From concerts to conferences, simplifying households, promoting local agriculture, to seeing that basic needs in education and health care are addressed. The financial context would be a balanced flow of energy open to anything but war. We will not contribute to genocide.

Most of my Groundcover articles are full of references to “We hold these truths to be self-evident.” We need consensus on reality. For example, I reject the machine model of reality and embrace reality as a living organic presence which gives us guidance when we respect and study what is happening in the life of this world. Therefore the first meeting of PPB will look at the work of Richard Werner, the German economist who spent enough time in Japan to understand the role of central banks, then wrote a bestseller in Japanese. The English title is “Princes of the Yen.” It is also in podcast form.

Basic science begins with the laws of thermodynamics. I want to focus on the conservation of energy. This law of thermodynamics states that mass-energy cannot be created or destroyed but changes form. It refers to a closed system. I assume that our



universe is a closed system, so from the Big Bang until now we have the same energy mass in our universe that is in constant motion amid transformation. If you search for the number of universes the answer tends to infinity. I will skip the quantum mechanics and relativity variations on the theme and go to Richard Werner’s empirical experiment which showed that loans create money out of nothing. I believe that loans are an expression of existing reality as it changes form. The legal expression “ex nihilo” (out of nothing) would then refer to a new expression of existing mass-energy. For completeness in theory we will accept the reality that atoms and molecules are mostly empty space which is an energy field.

A focused breath will help us foster a sane state of mind with the complexity of life. Simple and complex is the dialectic at work that can help us experience and create transformations; when you discover the unity of opposites you open the door to unconditional love. It is possible to miss the obvious because we are so distracted by thinking and miss the primordial awareness which is the source of thinking. I hope I am making enough sense that we can go to work. We can focus on the practical by looking at what needs to be done. Compost war and grow peace is a

priority project. Using the resources we have at hand, let’s look at the different forms of money and how to use them. I think that Gerald Celente is helpful here. From fiat currency to gold and blockchain technologies, how do we best put our energy to work? What projects are worthy of support?

I propose that we meet on May 25 during the 200th anniversary of Ann Arbor celebration on the Ann Arbor community commons. Starting at 11 a.m. there will be discussion with Conscious Cafe on development and use of community resources.

I recommend that you prepare by listening to Richard Werner’s presentation at the Dubai Capital Club on central bank digital currencies. This podcast could be shown at our first meeting. The VALHALLA Network is a decentralized autonomous organization to establish and own a global network of community banks. Let’s explore work with them and look at the time banking and local currencies that have been percolating in Ann Arbor for some decades. We may create a process for loans among ourselves that show promise of long term benefit. Bringing two households together to form one household could maximize best use of resources and create a surplus of healthy food and time for creative work.

One household could save money and more easily repay the loan. This is an example of things that could be done. Invest in peace and quality of life. No money for genocide.

Of course I am triple booked that weekend and plan to do

Friday night in Detroit at the Swords into Plowshares forum on Palestine, Saturday in Ann Arbor at the commons then back to Detroit on Sunday for the final day of the solidarity with Palestine and our global context. Monday is Memorial Day. Will Veterans For Peace do the Arlington Michigan cross display at Grand Circus Park?

There is no shortage of things to do — pick one and carry on.

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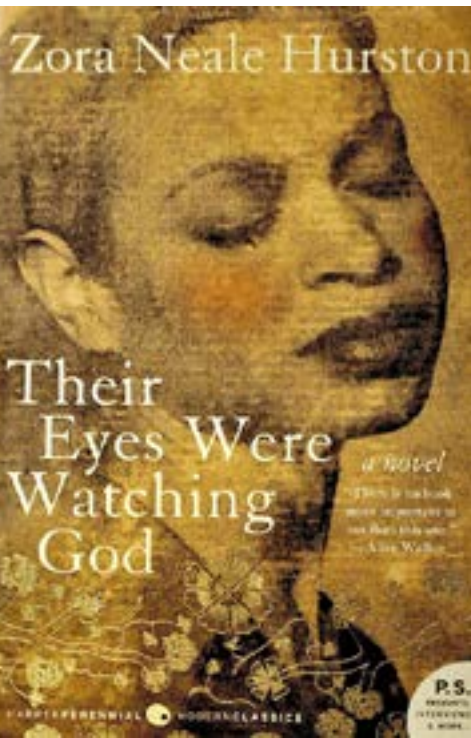
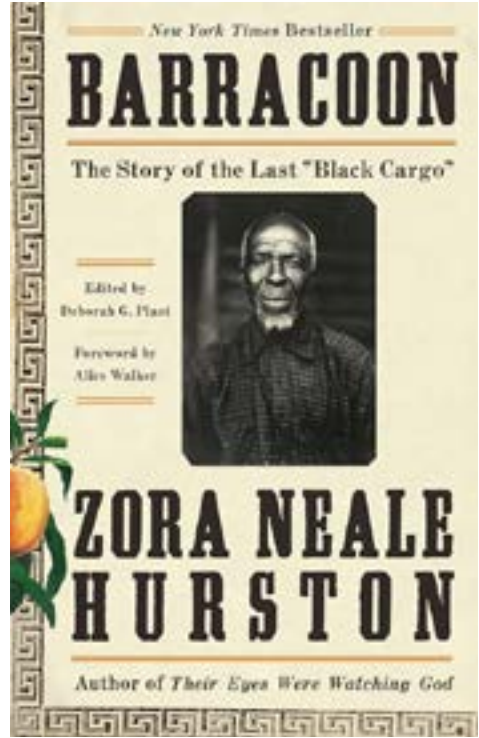
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MAY 2024 EVENTS AT BETHLEHEM
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www.bethlehem-ucc.org
for the most up-to-date calendar and event information.

Sunday Worship Time
10:00 am In-person
and via Live Stream

Coconut macadamia nut bars

ELIZABETH BAUMAN
Groundcover contributor

- Ingredients:**
2 cups all-purpose flour
1 tsp baking soda
1/2 tsp salt
1 1/2 sticks butter
2/3 cup granulated sugar
2 eggs
1 tsp vanilla
1 3/4 cups milk chocolate chips
2 cups shredded sweetened coconut
1 cup chopped roasted macadamia nuts

- Directions:**
Preheat the oven to 325 degrees.
Prepare a 9 x 13 glass pan by buttering it or spraying well with non-stick spray.
Combine the flour, baking soda and salt in a small bowl. Set aside.
In an electric mixer on medium speed, combine the butter and sugars until light and fluffy.
Slow down the mixer and add the



eggs, one at a time, and then the vanilla.
Gradually add the flour mixture to the batter just until combined.
Spread half of the batter into the pan.
Sprinkle the chocolate chips evenly over the top of the batter layer.
Stir the coconut and macadamia nuts into the remaining batter, then spread it over the chocolate chips.
Bake for 35 minutes, until the top is golden brown. The bars may still be slightly soft in the center, but they will set up as they cool.
Allow the bars to cool completely, then cut into rectangles and serve.

Where's Panda?

DAVID WINEY
Groundcover vendor No. 634



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MAY 1-31, 2024

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2	9	4	6	8	5	3	7	1
1	6	7	3	9	2	4	5	8
7	5	9	1	2	6	8	4	3
3	1	2	8	4	7	5	6	9
4	8	6	5	3	9	7	1	2
9	2	8	4	7	1	6	3	5
6	7	3	2	5	8	1	9	4
5	4	1	9	6	3	2	8	7

B	O	D	E	G	A		A	D	D	U	C	E							
E	V	E	N	E	D		P	L	E	A	S	A	N	T					
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